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background notes

Guinea

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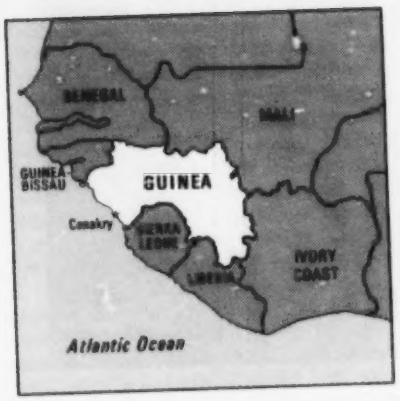

Official Name: Republic of Guinea

PROFILE

People

Nationality: *Noun and adjective*—Guinean(s). **Population** (1984): 5.8 million. **Annual growth rate:** 2.8%. **Ethnic groups:** Foulah, Malinke, Soussou, 15 smaller tribes. **Religions:** Muslim 85%, traditional 5%, Christian 10%. **Languages:** French (official), national languages. **Education:** *Years compulsory*—8. *Attendance*—primary school 34%, secondary 15%, post-secondary 6.9%. *Literacy*—35% (in French). **Health** (1985): *Infant mortality rate*—156/1,000. *Life expectancy*—41 yrs. **Work force** (2.5 million): *Agriculture*—82%. *Industry and commerce*—11%. *Services*—5.4%. *Government*—1.6%.

Geography

Area: 246,048 sq. km. (95,000 sq. mi.); about the size of Oregon. **Cities:** *Capital*—Conakry (pop. 705,280). *Other cities*—Kankan (76,640), Labe (40,360), N'Zerekore (55,360), Siguiri (37,360). **Terrain:** Generally flat along the coast and mountainous in the interior. **Climate:** Tropical.

Government

Type: Republic under Military Committee for National Redressment (CMRN). **Independence:** October 2, 1958. **Second Republic:** April 3, 1984. Government based on ordinances, decrees, and decisions issued by a president and ministers.

Branches: *Executive*—20-man CMRN with 10-man Executive Bureau; president (chief of state). *Judicial*—Supreme Court.

Administrative subdivisions: district, subprefecture, prefecture, province.

Political parties: None. **Suffrage:** Universal over 18.

Central government budget (1982): $140 million.

Defense (1982): $41 million or 29% of budget.

National holidays: Independence Day (Oct. 2), Anniversary of Second Republic (April 3), Labor Day (May 1), End of Ramadan Feast and Tabaski (lunar holidays, dates subject to change), Armed Forces Day (Nov. 1).

Flag: Red, yellow, and green vertical stripes.

Economy

GNP (1984): $1.6 billion. **Annual growth rate** (1984): 2.9%. **Per capita income** (1984): $305. **Avg. inflation rate** (1981): 5.6%.

Natural resources: Bauxite, iron ore, diamonds, gold, water power, uranium, fisheries.

Agriculture (40% of GNP): *Products*—rice, cassava, millet, corn, coffee, bananas, palm products, pineapples, livestock, forestry. *Arable land*—30%. *Cultivated land*—4%.

Industry (21% of GNP): *Types*—mining, small manufacturing, construction.

Trade (1983): *Exports*—$465 million: bauxite, alumina, pineapples, bananas, palm products, coffee. *Major markets*—Europe, US, USSR, China, Eastern Europe, West Africa, Canada, Japan. *Imports*—$350 million: petroleum, production materials, machinery, transportation equipment, foodstuffs, consumer goods. *Major suppliers*—Western Europe, US, USSR, China, Eastern Europe, Japan, Saudi Arabia, Morocco.

Official exchange rate: Approximately 25 sylis = US$1 (fixed).

Fiscal year: January 1–December 31.

Membership in International Organizations

UN and most of its specialized and related agencies, Organization of African Unity (OAU), African Development Bank (AFDB), Niger River Basin (NRB), Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), Organization of the Islamic Conference (OIC), Mano River Union (MRU), Gambia River Basin Organization (OMVG), Non-Aligned Movement.

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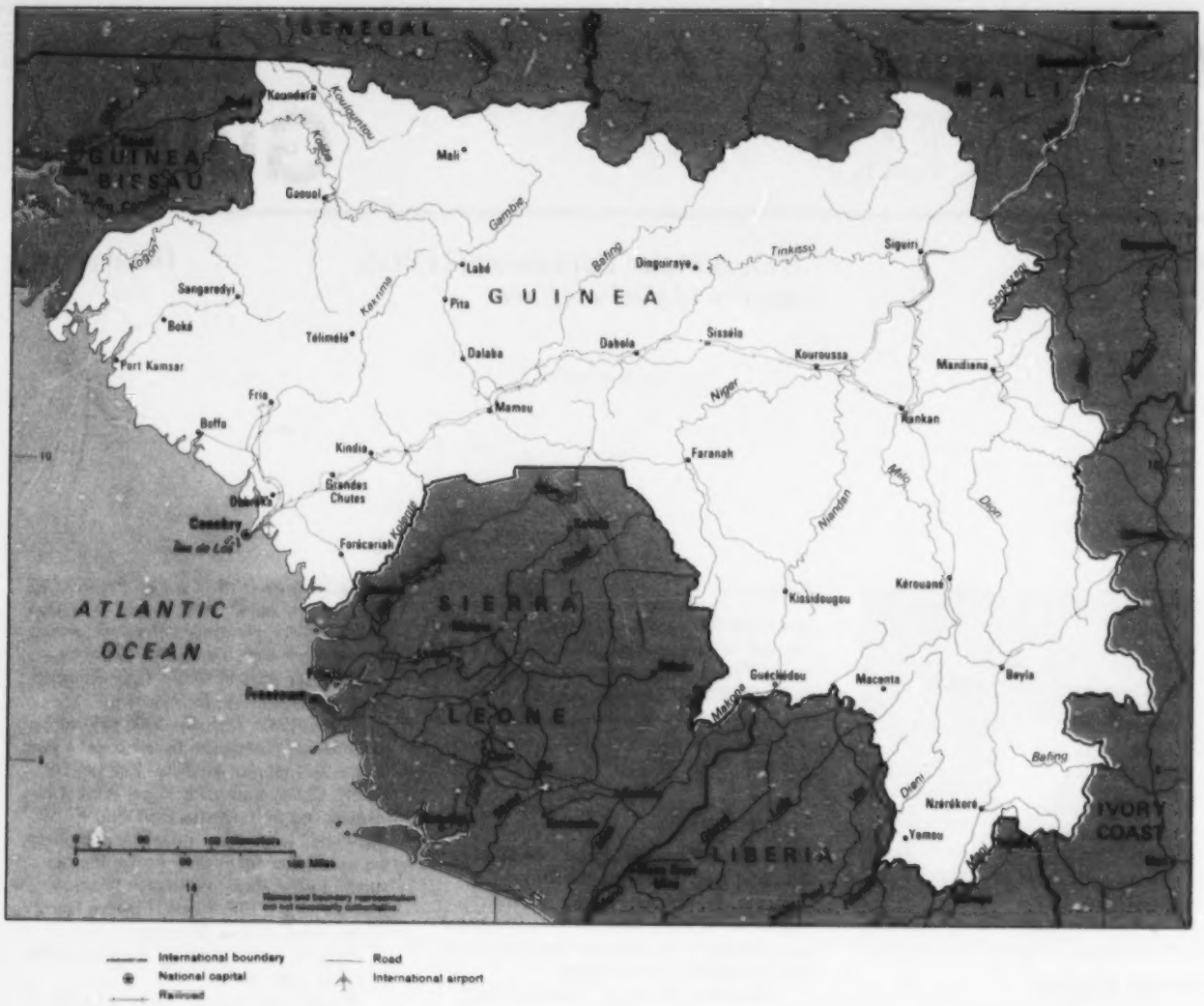

GEOGRAPHY

Guinea is on the "bulge" of West Africa. The country's four regions are the narrow coastal belt (Lower Guinea), the pastoral Fouta Djallon highlands (Middle Guinea), Upper Guinea, and the southeastern forest region. The Niger, Gambia, and Senegal Rivers are among the 22 West African rivers that rise in the Fouta Djallon.

The coastal region of Guinea and most of the inland have a tropical climate, with a rainy season lasting from May to November, relatively high and uniform temperatures, and high humidity. Conakry's year-round average high is 29°C (85°F), and the low is 23°C (74°F); its average annual rainfall is 430 centimeters (169 in.). Upper Guinea has one rainy season and greater daily temperature variations.

PEOPLE

Guinea has four main ethnic groups:

- Peuls (or Foulani), who inhabit the mountainous Fouta Djallon;
- Malinkes (or Mandingos), in the savannah regions;
- Soussous in the coastal areas; and
- Forestal tribes in the forest region.

Non-Africans number about 3,500. Seven national languages are used extensively; major written languages are French, Peul, and Arabic.

HISTORY

Guinea is partial heir to the series of West African empires that, at their height before the arrival of the Europeans, cast a degree of political and commercial influence over many ethnic groups from Guinea's Atlantic coast to the southern edge of the Sahara. The empires of Ghana, Mali, and Songhai spanned the period from about the 10th to the 15th century. French military penetration into the area began in the mid-19th century. By signing treaties with the French in the 1880's, Guinea's Malinke leader, Samory Toure, secured a free hand to expand eastward. In 1890, he allied himself with the Toucouleur Empire and Kingdom of Sikasso and tried to expel the French from the Sudan. He was defeated finally in 1898, and France gained control of Guinea and Ivory Coast.

France negotiated Guinea's present boundaries in the late 19th and early 20th centuries with the British for Sierra Leone, the Portuguese for their Guinea colony (now Guinea-Bissau), and the Liberians. After 1894, Guinea was governed by the French Ministry of Colonies. The Supreme Council for Overseas France, which included parliamentary deputies from the colonies, delegates elected by French citizens in the colonies, and representatives of African interests nominated by colonial governors, assisted the French Ministry of Colonies.

The French colonies of West Africa formed a federation headed by a governor general with lieutenant governors in charge of the individual colonies. They were subdivided into districts governed by commandants. The commandant ruled through a hierarchy of village-level African administrators appointed by him.

Although Europeans held the high administrative posts until after World War II, Guineans occupied some of the lower posts, even in the early 20th century. Colonial reforms after World War II gradually reduced the French administration and placed more political responsibility and power in the hands of Guineans. These reforms resulted from educated Guineans' heightened sense of nationalism, as well as from political pressure within France.

After World War II, French labor confederations and political parties became active in Guinea. The labor unions were modeled on French unions and usually became affiliated with them. Sekou Toure, Guinea's former president, first gained a mass following as a leader of the colonial section of the French union, *Confederation General du Travail* (CGT). In 1956, Toure withdrew from the CGT to organize a separate African confederation.

In 1947, the Democratic Party of Guinea (PDG) was founded as a section of the new international African Democratic Rally (RDA). This gave Toure and his associates a political membership in the general population. The RDA broke with the communists in 1950, and Toure, as head of the PDG, asserted that the Marxist doctrine of class struggle was inapplicable to Africa and that the movement must be freed of any vestige of European control. In the 1957 elections, the PDG won 58 to 60 sets in the Territorial Assembly. It played the leading role in Guinea's decision in 1958 to reject membership in the proposed French Community. Guinea became an independent republic in 1958, the only French colony to vote against entering the community. Sekou Toure and the PDG remained in power until April 3, 1984, when the present military government took power 1 week after the sudden death of Sekou Toure.

GOVERNMENT

Guinea is governed by the Military Committee for National Redressment (CMRN), which is headed by a 10-man executive bureau. Government administration is carried out at five governmental levels: district (known as "quartier" in cities), subprefecture, prefecture, province, and national.

Principal Government Officials

President—Col. Lansana Conte
Minister of State for Administrative Reforms and Civil Service—Capt. Mamadou Baldet
Minister of State for Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation—Capt. Facinet Toure
Minister of State for Plan and Natural Resources—Capt. Jean Traore
Ambassador to the United States—Tolo Beavogui
Ambassador to the United Nations—Salou Coumbassa

Guinea maintains an embassy in the United States at 2112 Leroy Place, NW., Washington, D.C. 20008 (tel. 202-483-9420).

POLITICAL CONDITIONS

The CMRN took over control of the government on April 3, 1984, just 1 week after the death of independent Guinea's one and only president, Ahmed Sekou Toure. It immediately abolished the constitution and the sole political party and its mass youth and women's organizations, and announced the establishment of the Second Republic. In lieu of a constitution, the government is based on ordinances, decrees, and decisions issued by the President and various ministers.

Political parties are not allowed. One of the first acts of the new government was to release all prisoners and declare observance of human rights as one of its primary objectives. It reorganized the judicial system to be independent with courts of first instance at the subprefecture and prefecture levels, courts of appeal at the provincial level, and a supreme court at the national level. The CMRN also declared its intention to liberalize the economy, promote private enterprise, and encourage foreign investment in order to develop the country's rich natural resources.

ECONOMY

Richly endowed with minerals, Guinea possesses an estimated one-third of the world's proven reserves of bauxite, more than 1.8 billion metric tons (MT) of high-grade iron ore, significant diamond and gold deposits, and undetermined quantities of uranium. Guinea has considerable potential for growth in the agricultural and fishing sectors. Soil, water, and climatic conditions provide opportunities for large-scale irrigated farming and agroindustry. Possibilities for investment and commercial activities exist in all these areas, but Guinea's poorly developed infrastructure, continuous foreign exchange shortages, and inconvertible and overvalued currency present obstacles to investment projects.

Joint venture bauxite and alumina operations in northwest Guinea provide about 96% of Guinea's foreign exchange. The *Compagnie des Bauxites de Guinee*, a joint venture in which 49% of the shares are owned by Guinea and 51% by an international consortium, produces about 8 million MT annually. The *Office*

Further Information

These titles are provided as a general indication of material published on this country. The Department of State does not endorse unofficial publications.

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For information on economic trends, commercial development, production, trade regulations, and tariff rates, contact the International Trade Administration, U.S. Department of Commerce, Washington, D.C. 20230 or any Commerce Department district office.

des Bauxites de Kindia (OKB) produced just under 3 million MT in 1984, nearly all of which was exported to the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe. The Friguia consortium, 49% owned by the government and 51% by an international consortium, produces about 500,000 MT of alumina annually.

Diamonds are the only other mineral being mined and exported on a large scale. AREDOR, a joint diamond mining venture between the Government of Guinea (50%) and AREDOR Holdings (50%), an Australian, British, and Swiss consortium, went into production in mid-1984 and is mining diamonds which are 90% gem quality. Other concession agreements have been signed for diamonds, gold, uranium, iron ore, and offshore petroleum, but most of these projects are in the exploratory phase or await financing.

The government enacted a new private investment code in 1984 to stimulate economic activity in the spirit of a free enterprise system. The code guarantees equal rights for investors without discrimination between foreigners and nationals. It restricts development of Guinea's mineral, forestry, and hydraulic resources to projects in which Guineans have majority shareholdings and management control, but contains a clause permitting negotiations of more favorable conditions for investors in specific agreements. A national investment commission is being formed to review all investment proposals. The United States and Guinea have an investment guarantee agreement which offers political risk insurance to American investors.

The Guinean economy is at a major crossroads. The CMRN inherited a state-controlled economy which it has decided to liberalize by encouraging free enterprise and private investment. It has liberalized trade, banking, and agricultural policies and has prepared an interim development plan to encourage the small farmer, develop human resources, rehabilitate infrastructure, turn parastatals over to the private sector, and introduce sound monetary and fiscal policies.

The government faces a monumental task given its inadequate infrastructure and heavy foreign debt burden, but it is intent on encouraging economic management, restricting public expenditures, and correcting monetary distortions. Guinea's economy has stagnated in recent years, but the government's new economic reform program—including flexible exchange rates—may create an environment favorable to productive investments and economic growth.

Travel Notes

Customs: Visas and valid yellow fever vaccinations are required for entry. Check latest health requirements. Guinean currency may not be imported or exported.

Climate and clothing: Tropical clothing is appropriate. Umbrellas are preferable to raincoats during the May–November rainy season.

Health: Sanitation is poor. Tapwater is not potable. Cholera, tetanus, typhoid, yellow fever, and typhus shots are recommended.

Malaria suppressants should be started 2 weeks before arrival and continued for a prescribed period after leaving Guinea.

Telecommunications: Long-distance telephone calls can be made, but service is unreliable. Telegraph service is costly and often delayed. Guinea is five time zones ahead of eastern standard time.

Transportation: Air Guinee, Air Afrique, Nigeria Airways, Air Morocco, UTA, Aeroflot, Air Zaire, Air Ghana, SABENA, Air Bissau, and Air Liberia operate through Conakry. Air Guinee also operates domestic flights. Schedules change on short notice occasionally, and last-minute checks are advisable.

Tourist accommodations: The three first-class hotels in Conakry, the Independence, Unite, and Gbessia, accept room payment only in hard currency or by credit cards.

DEFENSE

Guinea's armed forces comprise three services—the army, navy, and air force—and a gendarmerie. The commanding officers of these organizations report to the chief of staff, who is responsible to the Secretary of State for National Defense, equivalent to a minister of defense. The army, the largest of the three services, consists of about 8,000 officers and soldiers and is equipped largely with Soviet-supplied weapons and materiel. The navy has some 600 officers and other personnel and operates several small patrol craft and barges. Air force personnel number roughly 400 officers and others; its equipment includes several Soviet-supplied fighter and transport planes. Although Guinea is at peace with its neighbors, the armed services' mission is to maintain internal security and deter possible external attack.

FOREIGN RELATIONS

Guinea follows a nonaligned policy, balancing close ties with most communist states and good relations with Western powers, including the United States. It reestablished relations with France and the Federal Republic of Germany in 1975. Relations with neighboring Ivory Coast and Senegal, broken in the early 1970s, were resumed in 1978. Increasing efforts to seek aid from Western and nonaligned countries and to accelerate economic development marked Guinean policy during the late 1970s and early 1980s. After taking power in 1984, the military government appealed to all friendly governments, as well as multinational agencies, for aid and technical assistance. Although Guinea is a member of many international and regional organizations, the present government places more emphasis on internal affairs than on playing a leading role in African or international fora.

U.S.-GUINEAN RELATIONS

The United States seeks to promote closer relations with Guinea and to develop common interests; it encourages regional economic development and increased private U.S. investment.

From independence through 1971, the United States assisted Guinea's economic development with an AID [Agency for International Development] program amounting to almost $100 million. It consisted of agricultural commodities, transportation equipment, machinery, and technical assistance. A PL-480 (Food for Peace) program continues, and AID operations, most of which were suspended in 1971 at the Guinean Government's request, were resumed in 1976 with a modest program focusing on agricultural development and training. In FY 1983, a modest military training program was initiated under which a small number of Guinean officers receive training in the United States each year. In FY 1984, a military assistance program to provide the Guinean Navy with the capacity to patrol its 200-mile exclusive economic zone was established, with the first patrol boats to be delivered in 1985.

Principal U.S. Officials

Ambassador—James D. Rosenthal
Deputy Chief of Mission—William Mithoefer
AID Affairs Officer—Mark Wentling
Public Affairs Officer—Gary M. Spackey

The U.S. Embassy address is B.P. 603, Conakry, Guinea. ■